

MALACHI

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. Malachi, Heb. *Mal'aki*, means “my messenger.” However, the word may be a contraction of *Mal'akiyah*, meaning “messenger of Yahweh.” Because the name occurs nowhere else in the OT, some have felt that Malachi was not the prophet’s name, but merely a designation of him as God’s “messenger.”

2. Authorship. The prophet makes no reference to his personal life and gives no dates for his ministry. Yet there remains little doubt that he was the last of the OT prophets. That Malachi prophesied when the Captivity was little remembered, and after the Temple had been restored and its worship had for some time been instituted, is evident from the contents of his book. The abuses condemned by Malachi are very similar to the abuses that arose during Nehemiah’s absence from Jerusalem at the Persian court (see Neh. 13:6), and thus it is quite possible that Malachi was written about 425 B.C. At any rate, it is probable that the book should be dated either during Nehemiah’s time or shortly thereafter.

3. Historical Setting. When, many years after the original return from Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah, as King Artaxerxes’ “cupbearer” (see on Neh. 1:11), heard that conditions were not right in Jerusalem, he requested permission to visit his countrymen there. The king readily acceded to the request, granting Nehemiah a leave of absence for an unknown period of time (Neh. 2:5, 6). Nehemiah was appointed governor, and beginning in 444 B.C., carried on a mighty work of reformation among the returned exiles for a period of 12 years (see on Neh. 5:14). After he was called back to Babylon, some years passed before he returned to Judea. Upon his return he found a state of marked spiritual declension, which he endeavored to correct. It was during this general period, perhaps between Nehemiah’s two terms as governor, that the Lord raised up the prophet Malachi to turn the people back to wholehearted service for God. For a more complete survey of the historical background of Malachi see Vol. III, pp. 73–79.

4. Theme. In contrast with Zechariah’s thrilling prophetic outline of the limitless possibilities that lay before the Jews upon their return from exile (see pp. 29–32, 1085), Malachi’s prophecy, a century later, presents a dismal scene of progressive spiritual declension. To be sure, the exiles had returned from the land of their captivity to the Land of Promise, but in their hearts they remained in the far country of disobedience and forgetfulness of God (see pp. 31, 32). Their “failure to fulfill the divine purpose was very apparent in Malachi’s day” (PK 705). In fact, things had come to such a pass that even the priests despised the worship and service of God and were weary of religion (ch. 1:6, 13); and on His part, God was weary of their faithlessness and found their worship and service entirely unacceptable (chs. 1:10, 13; 2:13, 17). Although, for practical purposes, the covenant had lapsed by default, God mercifully continued to bear with His wayward people.

He commissioned the prophet Malachi to bear a stern message of warning, reminding the Jews of their past experiences as a nation and calling upon them to return to God and to the requirements of the covenant relationship (PK 705). Eight times the Lord addresses the people and their religious leaders, graciously and patiently calling attention to one aspect after another of their apostasy, and eight times they petulantly deny any degree of imperfection (chs. 1:2, 6, 7; 2:13, 14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13, 14). God’s patient endeavor to elicit

recognition of past mistakes, coupled with their progressively vehement denial of having made any, constitutes the theme of the book. This theme develops as follows:

- a. Tactfully, God begins by reminding Israel of His eternal love, but they callously protest a lack of evidence that He loves them. God responds by reminding them that it was by virtue of His love that they had become a nation (ch. 1:2–4).
- b. Observing that Israel owed Him the honor due a father from his son, God charges them with despising Him instead of requiting His love. They obtusely deny the charge. (v. 6).
- c. God submits evidence of their contempt for Him, pointing out their attitude toward the sacred rites of the Temple as an illustration. They have “polluted,” or made common, the most sacred things. But their response indicates utter blindness to any distinction between what is sacred and what is common (v. 7). They have a “form of godliness” but know nothing of its “power” (2 Tim. 3:5).
- d. God explains at length the worthlessness of their hollow round of religious ceremonies (chs. 1:8 to 2:12), concluding with the announcement that He will no longer notice or accept their offerings (ch. 2:13). Unabashed, and with a pretense of injured feelings, the people demand why God should thus ignore their worship and service (v. 14). Patiently He explains that the forms of religion are worthless when its principles are not applied to the practical problems of daily living (vs. 14–16).
- e. He is weary also of their hypocritical pretense at piety. The people defend themselves by insinuating that God’s charge is unwarranted and unjust. God answers: Their failure to distinguish between the sacred and the common in acts of worship is matched by a comparable failure to discriminate between good and evil in daily life. They condone evil with the excuse that it really does not matter, and imply that God should not care so long as they keep up the forms of religion (v. 17). But God warns them that obdurate impenitence will inevitably hasten the day of final judgment (ch. 3:1–6).
- f. God now charges Israel with complete apostasy, yet accompanies the solemn charge with a gracious invitation to return to Him. The people, however, profess utter surprise and indignation at the thought of having in any way departed from the path of strict obedience to His requirements (v. 7).
- g. God answers their challenge with specific, tangible evidence of their departure from Him. He charges them with robbery, but they refuse to admit the charge. However, silence on their part is tacit acknowledgment of its truth (vs. 8–12).
- h. Finally, God indicts the Jews for their brazen retorts to His successive attempts to get them to see their spiritual condition, but they refuse to admit that anything they may have said is untrue or improper (v. 13). God meets this denial by pointing to the crux of the problem—their mercenary, self-seeking spirit. They have not been serving God with sincere hearts, but in the hope of profit and personal advantage (see pp. 32, 33). Utterly and incurably defiant, they are ready to put God to the test. They declare their readiness to hale Him into court, as it were, rashly confident of proving His charges against them invalid (vs. 14, 15).

In chs. 3:16–18 and 4:2 God acknowledges the faithful few in Israel who remain loyal to Him and assures them of His unfailing love. At the same time (ch. 4:1, 3) He warns the wicked of their fate on the day of final judgment. The message of Malachi closes with the assurance that prior to the great day of the Lord a messenger will appear to assist Him in the work of preparing the “jewels” for His crown and preserving them through the day of judgment (chs. 4:4–6, 2; 3:17).

The message of Malachi is particularly appropriate for the church today, and is comparable to the Laodicean message of Rev. 3:14–22. Like the Laodiceans, the Jews of Malachi’s day were utterly insensitive to their true spiritual condition and felt their “need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17). They were “poor” in heavenly treasure, “blind” to their errors, and “naked,” or not clothed with the perfect character of Jesus Christ (v. 17). Like the man in the parable without a wedding garment (see on Matt. 22:11–13), they stood before the King of the universe, despising the garment of His righteousness and fully content with their own moral rags.

5. *Outline.*

- I. Divine Love Unappreciated and Unrequited, 1:1–6.
 - A. Introduction, 1:1.
 - B. God’s eternal love for Israel, 1:2–5.
 - C. Israel dishonors and despises God, 1:6.
- II. The Degenerate State of Religious Life, 1:7 to 2:17.
 - A. Failure to distinguish between things sacred and common, 1:7–10.
 - B. Failure of the Jews in their mission to the Gentiles, 1:11, 12.
 - C. Failure of the priests to provide spiritual leadership, 1:13 to 2:13.
 - D. Failure to apply the principles of religion to daily life, 2:14–17.
- III. A Summons to Judgment, 3:1–15.
 - A. A warning of the day of judgment, 3:1–6.
 - B. A specific indictment for robbery of God, 3:7–12.
 - C. An indictment for contempt of God, 3:13–15.
- IV. Preparation for the Day of Judgment, 3:16 to 4:6.
 - A. Deliverance for those who fear the Lord, 3:16, 17.
 - B. Annihilation for those who despise the Lord, 3:18 to 4:1, 3.
 - C. Divine guidance assured those who fear the Lord, 4:2, 4–6.

CHAPTER 1

1 *Malachi complaineth of Israel’s unkindness. 6 Of their irreligiousness, 12 and profaneness.*

1. Burden. Heb. *mašša’*, “burden,” “hardship,” or “utterance” (see on Isa. 13:1). The “burden” of Malachi was that Israel should not forget the lessons of the past.

2. I have loved. Endeavoring to awaken His people to a realization of their ingratitude, the Lord asks certain pointed questions. His love had constituted them a nation (Deut. 7:6–9). See p. 1122.

Wherein? This is the first of a series of questions, characteristic of the book of Malachi, which expose the self-justifying attitude of the people of Malachi’s day. These questions may not have been actually voiced by the people, but they truly reflect the inner thinking of the nation. The word “wherein” epitomizes the utter unconcern of the people for spiritual things and sounds the keynote of the book.

Yet I loved. Using this reference to brothers who were twins (Gen. 25:24–26), who thus had the same heredity and environment, the Lord endeavors to make plain to the Jews that the divine favor did not come to Israel because of birth, but because of character. Jacob was the one who, although he made painful mistakes, finally devoted his life to God’s service.

3. Hated Esau. From the context it seems that Edom, the nation of Esau’s descendants, is primarily referred to here rather than the man Esau himself. The use of

the word “hate” is a typical Oriental hyperbole (see Gen. 29:33; Deut. 21:15; see on Ps. 119:136), and should not be taken in its strongest sense. The Lord here makes plain His preference for Jacob and his descendants over Esau and his descendants. This preference arose, of course, out of the relationship of the two brothers to God. Because Jacob was spiritually-minded and had soul-saving faith, loving the things of God, his sins were forgiven and he enjoyed God’s favor and fellowship. Esau, on the other hand, was a worldly-minded, “profane person,” with no desire or love for divine things, and so he put himself outside the divine favor (Heb. 12:16, 17).

Waste. Whereas after their return from captivity the Israelites again took possession of and cultivated their land, restoring Jerusalem and its Temple, the Edomites do not seem to have made a similar recovery from the desolation and destruction brought upon them by the Babylonians.

Dragons. Rather, “jackals” (see on Ps. 44:19). The country of Edom was left to the prowling of these wild beasts.

4. Whereas. Or, “because,” or “if.” Should the Edomites resolve to restore their habitations, contrary to God’s purpose, the Lord would interpose to prevent their so doing.

Lord of hosts. See on Jer. 7:3. This title occurs frequently in the book of Malachi.

For ever. Heb. ‘*ad ‘olam* (see on Ex. 12:14; 21:6; 2 Kings 5:27).

5. Your eyes. That is, those of Judah. When the people sense the reality of God’s love, their complaining and murmuring will give way to praise and gratitude for His goodness.

From the border of Israel. The LXX reads “above the borders of Israel”; this is probably an expression meaning the entire world.

6. Mine honour. As their Creator, the One who had specially chosen, kept, and guarded them, God was the Father of His people (see Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6). He was, therefore, entitled to receive their reverence and respect.

O priests. God now turns in reproof to those who represented religion to the people and who should have been examples, as well as teachers (see on 2 Chron. 15:3), of obedience and sanctification.

Wherein? See on v. 2. Insensible to their spiritual condition, the priests plead not guilty. See p. 1122.

Despised thy name. Instead of returning His love in kind, they despised God (see v. 2).

7. Bread. Heb. *lechem*, sometimes used of food in general (see Gen. 3:19; 43:32; Ex. 2:20). “Bread” could not refer to the shewbread, for it was not offered on the altar. Possibly “bread” here refers to the flesh of the sacrificial victims (see Lev. 3:9–11, 15, 16). This is probably but one example of many that might be given of their carelessness in following the ritual law.

Wherein? See on v. 2. In their state of spiritual blindness the priests did not see that by offering “polluted [common] bread” they had dishonored the Lord.

In that ye say. They probably did not openly express contempt for the altar of the Lord by their words, but rather by their actions, namely, by bringing “polluted bread” to the altar. See p. 1122.

Table of the Lord. Evidently a reference to the altar of sacrifice.

8. Offer the blind. Since the law required sacrificial victims to be “without blemish” (Lev. 22:19), those mentioned in this verse were an offense to God. The people reasoned that it made no difference whether victims to be sacrificed were perfect. They might as well get rid of the deformed sheep and cattle and keep the healthy, perfect ones for themselves. God designs that men shall render Him their best. Reserving the best for some other purpose is evidence that God is not first in the life. To offer God less than first place is, in reality, to offer Him no place at all.

Governor. Heb. *pachah*, “a provincial governor” (see on Haggai 1:1). To offer such a dignitary what was defective would be an insult. If this was true in regard to a human being, how much more would it be true in regard to the great and exalted “Lord of hosts” (see on Jer. 7:3).

Accept thy person. Literally, “lift up thy faces,” meaning to receive with favor.

9. Beseech. Here Malachi pleads mightily for repentance on the part of the priests.

This hath been by your means. Literally, “This was from your hands”; or, alternatively, “Was this from your hands?” In other words, Is this action what you dare to do, or this gift what you dare to bring?

Regard your persons. See on v. 8.

10. Who is there? The prophet rebukes those serving the Temple in a mercenary spirit, those who did not perform their work for God faithfully and efficiently, though they were remunerated for even the smallest service.

Offering. Heb. *minchah*, ordinarily the “meal,” or “cereal,” offering (see on Lev. 2:1). Perhaps the prophet here means that these meal offerings, which were not naturally polluted, were unacceptable to God because of the wrong spirit in which they were offered.

11. From the rising. It was God’s purpose that His true worship should be spread throughout the earth (see pp. 25–38).

In every place. See Isa. 19:18, 19; Zeph. 2:11.

12. Profaned it. That is, God’s “name” (see v. 11).

Ye say. See on v. 7.

Table of the Lord. See on v. 7.

Meat. That is, “foods” in general.

13. Ye said also. See on v. 7.

What a weariness An allusion to the priests’ contemptuous boredom in carrying out their Temple services.

Snuffed. This expression indicates the extent to which the priests despised the altar.

That which was torn. Literally, “that which was seized by violence,” that is, things stolen or wrongly taken.

Lame, and the sick. See on v. 8.

Should I accept? They knew well that no human recipient would be pleased with such gifts (see v. 8). Why did they think God would be pleased?

14. Cursed. Divine judgment will descend upon him who, having an acceptable “male” sacrificial victim, offers instead a “corrupt,” that is, a blemished, sacrifice (see Lev. 3:1, 6).

Dreadful. Heb. *nora*’, from the verb *yara*’, “to fear” (see on Ps. 19:9). “Dreadful” is used here with the meaning “regarded with reverence and fear.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 PK 705
6–8CD 164
6–9SL 27
8 2T 259; 7T 175
9 PK 705
10 2T 344
11 PK 706
12–144T 471
13 CD 164; CS 202; MYP 342; SL 27; 1T 115, 196, 221; 3T 546; 6T 412; WM 289
14 7T 175

CHAPTER 2

1 *He sharply reproveth the priests for neglecting their covenant, 11 and the people for idolatry, 14 for adultery, 17 and for infidelity.*

1. Priests. Those who should have been true spiritual leaders and teachers (see on 2 Chron. 15:3) are here denounced by the prophet (Mal. 2:1–3).

2. Curse your blessings. Possibly a reference to the blessings the priests were accustomed to pronounce upon the people (see Lev. 9:22, 23; Num. 6:23–26), but more likely a reference to the blessings God Himself had bestowed upon them (see pp. 27, 28), such as promised by the prophet Haggai a century earlier (Haggai 2:15–19).

Already. The “curse” must even then have been apparent to these priests, and to the people as well.

3. Corrupt. Heb. *ga‘ar*, “to rebuke.”

Spread dung. A supreme evidence of contempt.

Your solemn feasts. God does not claim as His these feasts observed in His honor, for in their observance of these feasts the priests expressed nought but their own self-will and pleasure.

4. Ye shall know. The people will assuredly find by experience that these divine threats are not in vain.

My covenant. The covenant of “an everlasting priesthood” (Num. 25:13) was given to Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron, for his part in eliminating the worship of Baal-peor from the camp of Israel (see Num. 25:3–13).

With Levi. The tribe of Levi was chosen by God for His service because of the faithfulness of its members in a time of crisis (see on Ex. 32:29).

Lord of hosts. See on Jer. 7:3.

5. My covenant. See on v. 4.

Life and peace. The “covenant of peace” given to Phinehas (Num. 25:12) is explained as “the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Num. 25:13). “Life and peace” comprised God’s part of this agreement. These blessings would be bestowed on all the faithful priests after Phinehas.

For the fear. God gave His blessings to Phinehas because of “the fear wherewith he feared me.” So the priests’ part of the covenant was to give to God reverence and obedience. Now, the Lord through His prophet is endeavoring to renew His glorious covenant with the priests of Malachi’s day, those who, because of their wickedness, had become “contemptible and base before all the people” (v. 9).

6. Law. Heb. *torah*, the whole body of divine teaching or instruction (see on Deut. 31:9; Prov. 3:1). This verse shows that God intended that the priests should be spiritual leaders by both precept and example.

7. Keep knowledge. That is, they should preserve or safeguard knowledge. They were the religious leaders of the nation, yet their example provided the people with a pattern of disobedience.

Seek the law. The people had a right to expect proper instruction from the priests in reference to spiritual matters (see on 2 Chron. 15:3).

Messenger. The priest who rightly carried on his appointed work was as truly a “messenger” of God as was the prophet (see on Haggai 1:13). Some have seen significance in the fact that “Malachi” means “messenger of Yahweh” (see p. 1121).

8. To stumble. By both precept and example (see on v. 6) these priests had led many astray. Thus they had “corrupted” the covenant of Levi.

Covenant of Levi. See on v. 4.

9. Contemptible. It was only natural that the people should despise the priests for their attitude, which brought dishonor and disgrace to divine worship (see 1 Sam. 2:30). Hypocrisy is one of the most contemptible of sins.

10. One father. Malachi himself is speaking. In view of the context it is probable that he is referring to God Himself as their Father (see on ch. 1:6) rather than to Abraham or some other human being.

One God created us. Of all peoples of ancient times the Jews alone honored God pre-eminently and distinctively as the Creator, as indicated in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue (see Ex. 20:8–11). Thus it behooved them above all others to treat their fellow men as brothers. We may rightly expect today that those who honor God as the Creator should consider all men as brothers.

11. Judah. The whole nation was guilty of departure from God.

Holiness. Probably a reference to the Temple. As the place of God’s presence (see Ex. 25:8), it was “profaned” by the people’s sinful conduct.

Married the daughter. The LXX translates the last clause, “and has gone after other gods.”

12. Master. Literally, “the one arousing.”

Scholar. Literally, “the one answering.” “Master” probably refers to the watchman, or sentinel, and “scholar” to the people or soldiers aroused to action by the watchman. In other words, though the transgressors of Judah sense the oncoming danger, their lack of repentance makes it certain that they will all be “cut off.”

Tabernacles. Or, “dwellings.”

Offering. Heb. *minchah* (see on ch. 1:10).

13. Done again. The sin of the priests is aggravated by their hypocritical sorrow over God’s refusal to accept their offerings.

Regardeth not the offering. While they persisted in their evil ways God could not accept the sacrifices they brought before Him. To do so would be to confirm them in their evil ways.

14. Wherefore? This question is an evidence of the self-justifying skepticism of the people (see on ch. 1:2), which refuses to admit guilt. See p. 1122.

Wife of thy youth. Perhaps an indication that many of these wicked priests had put away their wives and taken other wives, possibly heathen women (see Ezra 9:1, 2; Neh. 13:23–28). It is possible also that spiritual adultery is here alluded to, as in v. 11.

Dealt treacherously. That is, proved faithless. The LXX reads “forsaken.”

15. Make one. The Hebrew of the first clause is somewhat obscure. The RSV reads, “Has not the one God made and sustained for us the spirit of life?” The admonition of the last part of the verse is clear. This, in turn, may give the clue to the meaning of the first part. The prophet is calling for a reformation in the treacherous dealings of the priests with the wives of their youth (see on v. 14). Hence the question “Did not he make one?” may be a reference to God’s plan that man and wife be “one flesh” (see on Gen. 2:24). The Lord strongly condemns the men of Malachi’s day, who by divorcing their lawful wives were violating the fundamental principle of unity in the marriage relationship.

16. He hateth. God adds His own personal attitude toward divorce. Therefore, the man who divorces his lawful wife covers his “garment with violence (RSV)”; that is, he invests himself with iniquity and its consequences, from which he cannot escape. It is evident from our Lord’s statement that unchastity is the only ground for divorce (see on Matt. 5:32).

17. Wearied. Divine patience has reached an end. God has long borne with the complaining and discontent of His people. The prosperity and glory they hoped would soon be theirs (see p. 27) did not arrive, and so they questioned the justice and holiness of God, and even the certainty of future judgment.

Wherein? See on ch. 1:2.

Evil is good. Sometimes evildoers try to make it appear that they are in reality good, and that they are prospered and blessed by God for their goodness.

Where? See on ch. 1:2; see p. 1122.

The God of judgment. Or, “the God of justice” (RSV). The people did not deny the existence of God, but doubted that He was concerned with human conduct. For practical purposes they had become deists. The heathen had a similar concept of their gods.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5, 6 Ed 148

5, 9 PK 706

10 PK 369

17 GC 557; PK 715; Te 232

CHAPTER 3

1 *Of the messenger, majesty, and grace of Christ.* 7 *Of the rebellion, 8 sacrilege, 13 and infidelity of the people.* 16 *The promise of blessing to them that fear God.*

1. My messenger. God replies to the closing question of the previous chapter by affirming with certainty that He is coming in judgment and righteousness. To the people of Malachi’s day this message was a warning that God would deal with their sins. However, in addition to its warning message for the Jews of Malachi’s day, this prophecy also had a Messianic import (see on Mark 1:2; see DA 161). John the Baptist was the “messenger” who prepared “the way before” the Lord by preaching repentance (see Isa. 40:3–5; Matt. 3:1–3; 11:10, 11; Luke 3:2–14).

Come to his temple. That is, to the most holy place for the work of the investigative judgment (GC 426).

Messenger of the covenant. Or, “angel of the covenant” (see on Haggai 1:13). The Lord, or “messenger of the covenant,” is none other than Christ, the second person of the Godhead (see on Ex. 3:2), and is to be clearly distinguished from the previously mentioned “messenger” of this verse. This prophecy regarding the “messenger of the covenant” applies not only to the time when Christ came to His Temple during His first advent (see DA 161), but also to the events connected with the close of earth’s history and the second advent (see GC 424; PP 339).

2. Who may abide? See Joel 2:11. The Jews believed that the Messiah was coming to punish the heathen in judgment. On the contrary, Malachi warns the Jews they will be the first to suffer judgment (see Amos 5:18).

Refiner’s fire. As a fire separates the metal from the dross, so God by His judgment separates the righteous from the wicked (see on v. 1).

Fullers’ soap. Not a true soap, which was probably unknown in ancient times, but a vegetable alkali obtained from the burning of certain plants, and used for washing purposes.

3. He shall sit. The previous thought (v. 2) is repeated for emphasis.

The sons of Levi. The priests are mentioned especially as those most responsible for leading the people in righteousness by their example and teaching (see Mal. 2:1–9; see on 2 Chron. 15:3).

Purge. The chastisement upon the “sons of Levi” is designed not only to cleanse their souls by ridding them of evil, but also to foster an advance in holiness by fitting them to “offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (see Rom. 12:1; 2 Peter 3:18; DA 161).

Offering. Heb. *minchah* (see on ch. 1:10).

4. Pleasant. The removal of sin by priests and people will restore the divine favor (see PK 706).

Days of old. The Jews considered such periods as those of Abraham, Moses, and David as more or less ideal times.

5. To judgment. In other words, “Here is the judgment!” the divine answer to the question, “Where is the God of judgment?” (ch. 2:17).

Sorcerers. The divine displeasure was especially directed against those who practiced heathen magical arts (see Ex. 22:18; Deut. 18:10), for example, those arts prevalent in Babylon (see on Dan. 2:2).

Adulterers. Another group to come especially under the indictment of God were those guilty of immorality, including those who secured unlawful divorces (see on ch. 2:14–16). How sweepingly would this same indictment apply to thousands of persons living today!

False swearers. The LXX reads “them that swear falsely by my name” (see Lev. 19:12).

Oppress the hireling. God calls on His professed followers to be just, yes, even liberal, with those who are dependent upon wages for their daily sustenance (see Deut. 24:14, 15; James 5:4).

Widow ... fatherless ... stranger. The Lord made special provisions to guard the rights of those who are in any degree defenseless, helpless, or in need of protection (Ex. 22:21, 22; Deut. 24:17; 27:19). The Jews were forbidden to take advantage of the “stranger,” or foreigner, among them.

6. *I change not.* Here the Lord effectively refutes the charge that He winks at evil (ch. 2:17). God's holiness is everlastingly constant and unalterable (see Num. 23:19; James 1:17). It is precisely because God does not change that His eternal purpose toward His people will stand. He may punish, discipline, and correct them, but all this is for the purpose of bringing repentance and salvation to them.

7. *Ye are gone away.* God had been true to His promises (see on v. 6), yet the people had not been true to Him, particularly in tithes and offerings (vs. 8, 9).

Return unto me. The burden of the prophet's message (see on ch. 1:1) is not a pronouncement of judgment upon sinners, but a call to repentance and fidelity to God, accompanied by a solemn reminder of the past history of Israel. To "return" to God is to repent of sin and make a thorough reformation in the life. This is the theme of the book of Joel (see Joel 2:12, 13).

Wherein? Again (see on ch. 1:2) the people reveal their hypocritical self-justification in questioning God. See p. 1122.

8. *Will a man rob God?* Strong language indeed! Mincing no words, Malachi shows specifically in what way the people have "robbed" God: by withholding from Him the "tithes and offerings" that are His due (see Lev. 27:30, 32; Num. 18:21; Neh. 10:37–39).

Offerings. Some fail to realize that it is possible to "rob" God in "offerings" even as in tithe. One who senses his obligations as a steward of God's bounties will freely give the Lord offerings according to his ability, "as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16:2).

9. *Ye are cursed.* The immediate context (v. 11) suggests that the "curse" was that of crop scarcity and field devastation (see Haggai 1:6; Mal. 2:2). The "curse" automatically followed disobedience as blessing followed obedience (see pp. 27, 28). There is no neutral ground; a man is either right or wrong in his conduct, and God rewards him accordingly.

Whole nation. In strong condemnation the prophet refers to Judah as "this whole nation" rather than as God's people. It is evident that this robbery of God was practiced by all.

10. *All the tithes.* Or, "the full tithes." This implies that if the people paid tithe, they did not pay a full or honest tithe. Let us be sure that we do not make the same mistake as the people of Malachi's day (cf. 1 Cor. 10:6–10). The Giver of all has a right to expect us to render Him an honest tithe, and also willing gifts as we are able.

Meat. Better, "food."

Windows of heaven. Compare Gen. 7:11; 8:2. Not only will there be plenty of rain to remove all fear of drought, but through these openings, so to speak, the divine blessing will be poured out in great abundance (see Lev. 26:3–5).

Blessing. Not necessarily a material blessing, though that seems to be emphasized here (see on v. 11). For the material blessings God designed to bestow upon His people, see pp. 27, 28.

11. *The devourer.* Probably a reference to locusts, which were so destructive of crops (see on Joel 1:4). The Lord here promises material prosperity to those who are faithful in tithe paying.

12. *Call you blessed.* God desired that His people be an object lesson of the results of obedience (see pp. 26–29).

13. *Stout against me.* Or, "firm against me" (see Jude 15). The LXX reads, "Ye have spoken grievous words against me." The prophet here contrasts the wicked murmuring of

the people (Mal. 3:13–15) with the reward that those faithful to God will receive (vs. 16–18). See p. 1122.

Yet ye say. See on ch. 1:2.

14. It is vain. That is, nothing is to be gained. Evidently the prophet is condemning them because what little they did for God was from selfish motives.

15. We call the proud happy. The murmurers do not consider that the humble and meek are “happy,” or blessed by the Lord, but consider that the “proud” and arrogant enjoy good fortune and well-being in the world (see Isa. 13:11).

They that tempt God. That is, those who put God to the test and provoke Him by reason of their wickedness. The LXX reads, “They have resisted God.”

16. Feared the Lord. Malachi brings a message of hope and comfort to those who are still faithful to the Lord. What a contrast between the iniquitous complainers mentioned above (vs. 13–15) and those who are truly righteous!

A book of remembrance. The prophet encourages those who are endeavoring to do what is right with the thought that God remembers the devoted service of His people (see on Dan. 7:10).

17. They shall be mine. In the day when the sinners in Israel are arraigned before the bar of divine justice, God promises to recognize His “jewels” and spare them from the fate of the wicked.

Jewels. Heb. *segullah*, “[private] property,” or “special possession” (see on Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; Ps. 135:4; cf. 1 Peter 2:9).

I will spare them. Note the two reasons for God’s mercy toward His faithful children: they are His sons (see John 1:12; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26), and they serve Him as obedient children (see Ps. 103:13; Rev. 14:12).

18. Discern between. The prophet points forward to the time when all will be made plain, a time when the questions raised by the people of his day (see chs. 2:17; 3:14) will be finally and satisfactorily answered. Both in the nation’s history and in the individual Israelite’s life many incidents had witnessed to the fact that God deals differently with the godly and the ungodly. However, in the day of the Lord convincing evidence will be given of God’s judgment and justice (see Ps. 58:11).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–18TM 305; 6T 384; 9T 53, 249

1 GC 424; PK 700

1–3DA 161

1–4PK 715

2 PP 339; 2T 459

2, 3 GC 621; ML 92; 4T 85

2–4GC 425

3 CD 49; LS 62; PP 129; TM 446; 1T 340, 355; 2T 269, 317; 3T 417; 4T 221; 5T 485, 487

3, 4 3T 541

5 COL 372; CS 128, 143; GC 426; MM 92; PP 652; 2T 157, 159; 4T 490; 6T 388

6, 7 TM 306

7 CS 89; PK 706; PP 165; Te 131; 1T 143; 4T 208; 6T 387

7, 8 COL 144

7–12PK 707; 6T 446

- 8 AA 336; CS 74, 86, 95, 249; Ed 143; PP 497; SL 32; 2T 653; 3T 269; 4T 311, 470, 474, 477, 480; 5T 271, 382, 643, 734
- 8, 9 AA 339; COL 372; CS 49, 92; 1T 221, 532; 2T 59
- 8–10CS 67, 77, 82, 90; TM 305, 307; 3T 394, 510
- 8–111T 222
- 8–123T 409; 6T 388
- 9 CS 85; MYP 306; 6T 387; 9T 250
- 9, 10 5T 275
- 10 AA 338; CH 374; CS 39, 75, 83, 89, 199, 299; Ed 138; MYP 307; PP 529; TM 60; 2T 576, 601; 5T 150, 643; 9T 251
- 10–12COL 144; Ed 140; 5T 153
- 11 CS 89; PP 527; 9T 52
- 11, 12 TM 308; 3T 395
- 13, 14 5T 287
- 13–156T 389
- 13–18TM 276
- 14 SR 60; 4T 106; 6T 266
- 16 COL 404; CS 88; EW 114; GC 481; MYP 347; SC 101
- 16, 17 CT 339; ML 207; TM 82; 4T 107, 330; 5T 600
- 16–186T 390
- 17 AA 598; COL 118, 283; ChS 268; EW 70; GC 634; TM 234; 2T 25; 5T 96, 368, 408; 9T 56
- 18 ChS 263; COL 74; CS 128; Ev 593, 619; GC 640; MH 180; PP 341; TM 266, 270; 1T 277; 2T 125; 5T 227; 7T 123; 8T 247; 9T 15, 158

CHAPTER 4

- 1 *God's judgment on the wicked, 2 and his blessing on the good. 4 He exhorteth to the study of the law, 5 and telleth of Elijah's coming and office.*

1. The day cometh. The prophet gives a solemn assurance to those who ask, “Where is the God of judgment?” (ch. 2:17) that there is a future day in which God will execute judgment and justice upon all the wicked. This is the “day of the Lord” of Joel 1:15; 2:1; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 2:1–3; etc. For comment see on Isa. 13:6; 2 Peter 3:10–12.

Shall burn. God's final judgment upon the wicked is total destruction by fire (see Rev. 20:9; see on Eze. 28:16–19).

Proud. The sin of pride is especially offensive to God, and is the only one singled out for mention here by Malachi.

Stubble. No stronger language could be used to indicate the complete destruction of the ungodly. They will not linger on in everlasting suffering as is often erroneously believed, but will be as readily consumed as is “stubble” (see Ps. 37:10, 20; Isa. 5:24).

Burn them up. The Scriptures know nothing of the popular fallacy of an eternally burning hell. The wicked do not keep on burning endlessly; the fires of the last day will literally “burn them up.” See on Jer. 17:27; Matt. 3:12; 25:41; 2 Peter 3:7–13; Jude 7.

Neither root nor branch. A striking figure indicating the utter annihilation of sin and sinners (see on Nahum 1:9). Satan, represented as the “root,” or originator, of evil, and his followers, represented as the branches, are all completely destroyed (see Ps. 37:38).

2. The Sun of righteousness. An expressive figure of Christ as the “light of the world” (John 8:12; see John 1:4) and the Source of our righteousness (see Jer. 23:6; 1

Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Christ is ever ready to bring spiritual light to His people in times of need. In this sense it may be said that the “Sun of righteousness” arose at the first advent of Christ (see DA 261), and will “arise” in a special way in the time of great moral darkness just preceding His second advent (see PK 716, 717).

Grow up. Heb. *push*, “to spring about,” or “to paw the ground [playfully].” The redeemed are pictured as leaping for joy at the final outcome of God’s justice and love (see GC 673).

Calves of the stall. Heb. *‘egle marbeq*, “fatted [?] calves.” The exact meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. The RSV reads “calves from the stall.” The LXX reads “young calves let loose from bonds.”

3. Tread down. The righteousness are pictured as finally victorious over the wicked. See on Isa. 66:24.

In the day. See on v. 1.

Lord of hosts. See on Jer. 7:3.

4. Remember ye. Malachi closes his prophecy with an admonition to his people to be obedient to God. Human obedience must precede divine blessing. It is significant that the prophet who closes the OT canon should stress the necessity and the importance of observing God’s instructions to His people given on Mt. “Horeb” (see Lev. 26; Deut. 28). It is significant also that “the law of Moses” was to play an important part in helping people prepare for the day of the Lord.

Moses my servant. Evidently he is particularly mentioned because he was the “mediator” (see Gal. 3:19; Deut. 5:5) through whom God’s instructions, His “statutes and judgments,” were given at Sinai (see Ex. 24:12–18; Neh. 10:29).

5. Elijah the prophet. This prophecy led many of the Jews of later times to expect a return to earth of Elijah himself (see John 1:21). However, this is a prophecy of someone who was to come in “the spirit and power” of Elijah (Luke 1:17), that is, who would preach a message similar to that of Elijah. Before the first advent of Christ this work was done by John the Baptist (Matt. 17:12, 13; Luke 1:16, 17; see on Mal. 3:1), and before the second advent of Christ a similar work will be done by those who preach the three angels’ messages to the world. For further comment see on 1 Kings 18:19–44; Matt. 3:3, 4; 11:14.

Day of the Lord. See on Isa. 13:6.

6. Turn the heart. The message here foretold would be a message leading to true repentance, and many would “turn to the Lord their God” (Luke 1:16). See on Mal. 3:7.

Children. Literally, “sons,” a reference to the literal children of Israel, many of whom would return to the true faith of their fathers, the patriarchs. For further comment see on Luke 1:16, 17.

Curse. Heb. *cherem*, “a thing devoted to destruction” (see on Joshua 7:12; 1 Sam. 15:21). The OT closes with this solemn warning. Those who do not truly repent must be numbered with the wicked and suffer their fate (Mal. 4:1). Nevertheless, Malachi presents a message of hope, for the same God who destroys the guilty brings everlasting “healing” (v. 2) to the repentant.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

- 1 DA 763; EW 52, 151, 295; GC 504, 672, 673; PP 341; SR 428, 429; 1T 132; 4T 633

- 2 COL 67, 419; CT 468; DA 22, 48, 261; Ed 106; GC 74, 645; MH 32, 115, 216, 251; ML
15, 160; MM 126; PK 373, 688, 717; TM 445; 3T 335; 4T 342, 354; 6T 54; 7T 81
- 5 PK 187, 716; TM 475; 3T 62
- 5, 6 Te 91
- 6 ML 198
- 1

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Mal 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.